

DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES



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TO: Vaccines for Children (VFC) Providers
FROM: Lori Hutchinson, Vaccine Coordinator
Montana Immunization Program
DATE: December 27, 2012
SUBJECT: Policy Prohibiting the Use of Dormitory-Style Storage Units for VFC Vaccine

A dormitory-style (also called "bar-style") refrigerator is a combined refrigerator/freezer that has the freezer housed inside the refrigerator and both are accessed by one external door. Most dormitory-style refrigerators are small, but the term "dormitory-style" does not refer to size. It refers to the location of the freezer inside the refrigerator. Studies have shown that these units cannot reliably hold vaccine storage temperatures.

Our policy for the last two years has been to prohibit the use of dormitory-style storage units for the permanent storage of VFC vaccine, but to allow them for temporary storage (<12 hours). This was consistent with CDC guidance.

With this month's update of the *Vaccines for Children (VFC) Operations Guide*, **the CDC is now prohibiting the use of dormitory-style storage units for both the temporary and permanent storage of VFC vaccines.** The Montana Immunization Program has adopted this policy as described below:

- Starting January 1, 2013, Montana VFC providers are prohibited from using dormitory-style storage units for any type of VFC vaccine storage, temporary and permanent.
- During the re-enrollment process each year, VFC providers must certify that they do not use dormitory-style storage units for VFC vaccines or they will not be allowed to re-enroll in the program.
- VFC providers found to be using dormitory-style storage units for VFC vaccine will be immediately inactivated from the VFC Program until the unit can be replaced and may be required to reimburse the cost of the vaccine stored in the dormitory-style unit.

(Over)

Complying with this Policy

- If you currently do not store VFC vaccine in dormitory-style storage units at your facility, **complete the attached certification form and fax it to the Immunization Program (444-2920) by January 31, 2013.**
- If you currently use a dormitory-style unit for VFC vaccine (temporary or permanent storage), **you must immediately replace the unit or find alternative storage in an approved storage unit.** Then complete the attached certification form and fax it to the Immunization Program. You will not be allowed to re-enroll in the VFC Program for 2013 until we have a signed certification form on file for your facility.

This policy will be included in the updated *VFC Provider Handbook/Vaccine Management Plan* to be distributed in February 2013. If you have any questions, please contact Lori Hutchinson at the Montana Immunization Program at 444-0277 or lhutchinson@mt.gov.